Enhancement of Air Service to Gulf Countries from Kerala

4566. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the Kerala passengers from Gulf countries to Kochi, Trivandrum and Kozhikode are suffereing due to the non-availability of enough flights and not allowing the foreign airways to fly on this route;

(b) if so, the steps taken to meet the demand on this sector; and

(c) whether the Air India will introduce more flights to this sector?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) and (b) In order to provide better connectivity to international passengers from Kerala, the Government have recently declared the new Cochin Airport at Nedumbassery as an international Airport. Foreign airlines can now seek access to this airport subject to formal exchange of air traffic rights. Apart from this, the air traffic rights of some of the Gulf carriers operating services to Trivandrum have also been enhanced recently.

(c) Due to constraints of aircraft capacity, Air India have no immediate plans to introduce more international flights from Kerala.

Expansion of air Services in Himachal Pradesh

†4567. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of cities in Himachal Pradesh from where air services are being operated constantly;

(b) the month-wise number of passengers who are benefited by these air services;

(c) the details of the remaining cities to be connected with the air services during the Ninth Five Year Plan;

(d) whether it is a fact that the foreign tourists, who want to avail air services in Himachal Pradesh, cannot avail the same due to the

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

shortage in the number of aircrafts, as a result of which the country is deprived of foreign exchange earning; and

(e) the action being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) Three cities in Himachal Pradesh Dharmashala, Kullu and Shimla are airlinked by I.A. by Dorneir (19 seater) aircraft.

(b) Total no. of passenters travelled on flights connecting these places, month-wise during 1999-2000 is as under:—

April, 1999	638	October, 1999	575
May, 1999	857	November, 1999	565
June, 1999	908	December, 1999	546
July, 1999	241	January, 2000	322
August, 1999	201	February, 2000	468
September, 1999	395	March, 2000	563

(c) Airlines are free to connect any places in their commercial judgement subject to compliance with the Route Dispersal Guidelines which stipulate certain minimum operations on specified category of routes.

(d) and (e) At present, airline operators do not have smaller aircraft suitable for operation in the hilly terrain of Himachal Pradesh. With a view to provide an incentive for operation of aircraft to connect such places, it has been decided to provide ATF to turbo-prop aircraft at international prices. After the implementation of this decision, it is expected that operators would come forward to acquire such aircraft and deploy them on various routes.